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The XVII C. Safavid Diplomatic Envoy to Siam: A Politics of Knowledge Formation

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Propositions Dissertation

Anahita Arian, University of Groningen

The XVII C. Safavid Diplomatic Envoy to Siam: A Politics of Knowledge Formation

1. This dissertation demonstrates the fecundity of historical epistemology as an approach for the study of history in the field of International Relations.
2. The novelty of this study is that it provides to history in the field of International Relations an insight into the Safavid Empire, its political order, its politics and governance of knowledge formation, how it related itself to other peoples and polities – Asian and European alike – and the diplomatic mission to Siam.
3. The formation of knowledge by the Safavid diplomatic envoy about the encountered Khārijites in Muscat, the English in Madras and the Siamese in Siam was possible due to two principal conditions: the Safavid *ilm al-inshā*, which governed the formation of knowledge, and the power relations *between* the Safavid envoy and the encountered peoples, *within* the Safavid Empire, and *among* various polities.
4. This study provides a glance into the politics of various types of European and Asian actors and their interactions and connectivity with one another in the Indian Ocean region in the late seventeenth century. On the basis of this, it has created an opening for a global or respatialized history about the formation of shared norms and understandings regarding the conduct and symbols of diplomacy, sovereignty and power across Eurasia.
5. Through the exploration of the Safavid envoy's diplomatic mission to Siam what has been illuminated is that a common understanding between various polities across Eurasia about the practice of diplomacy was emerging in the late seventeenth century. This common understanding was concerned with what roles an ambassador and an envoy had to perform, how diplomacy had to be conducted, and what relations of power were symbolically expressed and established through the enactment of diplomatic rituals, audiences, the treatment of envoys and royal letters, and gift-giving.
6. The exploration of the Safavid practice of knowledge production about encountered peoples and more specifically the Safavid practice of inferiorization, discrimination and/or objectification of Europeans and non-Europeans alike lays bare the aporia of postcolonial and decolonial thought.